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ABSTRACT

Using a "self-awareness" approach, this paper discusses a course in family communication designed to force students to examine their families, how they communicate, and the implications of that communication. Based on a text by Kathleen Galvin and Bernard J. Brommel, "Family Communication: Cohesion and Change," the "syllabus" begins with a discussion of two problems facing any educator: what approach to take in teaching the course; and the role of sociological and psychological research in the course. The syllabus includes a disclaimer that individuals not trained in fields of counseling, psychology, or counseling psychology should not take an approach that may lead students to emotionally stimulating discoveries. A detailed listing is presented of course objectives, students' responsibilities, and class procedures, geared to each chapter of the above-mentioned text. The syllabus concludes with probe questions and statements keyed to each chapter of the textbook. (RS)

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APPROACHES TO TEACHING THE FAMILY COMMUNICATION COURSE

"A SELF-AWARENESS APPROACH"

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Assuming that it is the instructor's decision to make, one of the major problems facing any educator, is deciding what approach to take in teaching a course. In certain classes the decision on approach is fairly easy. Select a textbook and follow the format. In some cases, such as the sciences, the subject matter and tradition dictates the choice. In biology or chemistry, for example, the lecture-laboratory/experiment, format is normally selected.

In the social sciences the problem becomes greater, in fact, tricky. Should the student learn theory, divorced of personal application; or application, devoid of theory; or, a combination there-of. How much application should be encouraged?

Since family communication may be considered a social science as it examines a societal issue, the instructor needs to ask himself/herself the questions, "What do I want my students to gain from this class? What format or formats--lecture, discussion, experiential learning, group work--do I believe will best allow them to learn and/or apply the material? And, if the decision is made that the pattern should have discussion, experiential learning and/or group work, what should be the nature of these activities?

Another problem often rears its head regarding the teaching of classes such as interpersonal, relational or family communication. If this is a speech communication department offering, what is the role the sociological and psychological

research regarding these courses? If the decision is made to include the sociological and psychological materials, is the instructor capable of dealing with the resulting outcomes of student's self-discovery and possible emotional reactions. And, what makes this offering different than the family, relational or interpersonal courses taught in those departments.

Regarding the sociological and psychological materials, my feeling is that we not only should, but must include the research and concepts. They have found out information that helps us not only understand what people do, think and feel, but how they communicate about it. That, in my opinion is the clue--How do people communicate about it? That is what should be the basis for our approach to including our peers in allied field's findings. For example, in examining Margaret Axline's concept of the family as a system which operates like a mobile, we can examine how that system communicates, what are the lines of communication between the individual members, what communication techniques are used to calibrate the original system, and when it becomes necessary, what communication techniques are available to recalibrate the mobile. This, leads me to a disclaimer about the approach I have selected to present in this paper:

A DISCLAIMER REGARDING THE MATERIALS IN THIS PACKET

I thoroughly believe that individuals not trained in fields

of counseling, psychology or counseling sociology, should not take an approach which forces students to probe into their personal histories, be encouraged to share personal examples, or be expected to do projects which open themselves to possible emotionally stimulating discoveries.

As a certified counselor and hypnotherapist, in private practice, and a holder of a doctorate in communication, with an emphasis in interpersonal communication, I have chosen a self-awareness approach to teaching the family course. I would not encourage others, with a different background, to teach the same way I approach the course. There are, however, some of the ideas and activities which I use, which almost any instructor could adopt to her/his approach to teaching family communication.

I think you have to recognize the dangers of overstretching your boundaries of competence in dealing with materials which can trigger student flashbacks, such as instances of incest, rape, or abuse, and which can place them into uncomfortable situations, which you are not capable of handling. Though I have never experienced an emotional breakdown in class brought about by an activity or assignment, I have had students come to my office for advice on where to go to seek help or ask for guidance. I do not function as a therapist for my students, and would not do so. I do act as a conduit to lead them to help if they need it. There is, however, always the danger of triggering reactions, and that awareness must be present. Good intentions are not enough. The ability to handle such reactions is, in my opinion, imperative.

An examination of the this syllabus, illustrates what I call "A SELF-AWARENESS APPROACH TO TEACHING THE FAMILY COMMUNICATION COURSE" as it forces the student to examine his or her family, how they communicate, and the implications of that communication.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION

TEXT: GALVIN, KATHLEEN AND BERNARD J. BROMMEL, FAMILY COMMUNICATION: COHESION AND CHANGE, 3RD EDITION

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An in-depth study of family communication.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of the course the student should be able to:

1. Understand a systems approach to family communication.
2. Be aware of family communication rules, networks, and relational currencies.
3. Understand family communication concepts such as biosocial roles, self-disclosure, sexuality and intimacy, family topologies, power and decision making.
4. Understand and demonstrate the communication skills of "fair fighting" in family conflicts.
5. Be aware of the variables affecting family communication such as sex, culture, race, and age.
6. Understand the process of family communication enrichment.
7. Understand the effect of toxic families and order of birth on a person's communication.
8. Demonstrate the skill of empathic listening as it pertains to

effective family communication.

ENTERING THOUGHTS

We are born into a family. We are socialized and enculturated within a family. We mature from a family. We create a family using information and behaviors learned from a family. And, when we die, we diminish a family. Families surround us, shape us, contribute to our destiny. (Judy Goldberg)

COURSE MATERIALS

Week	Chapter
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9 & 10
10	11
11	12 & 13
12	14
13	Reports

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND CLASS PROCEDURES

Absences...Because the class format is student-centered, your presence is needed and required. We all have days when we just don't care about the educational process, don't feel well, or need

to do other things. You have **two personal days** to do those things. Absences above those two will adversely affect your final evaluation as a deduction of one grade may be made for each absence over the limit.

Assignment due dates...Assignments are due the day they are expected to be done. A one grade reduction will be made for each day the assignment is late. **No assignment will be accepted more than one class day after the collection of materials.**

Grading...

Test I.....150

Test II.....150

Research Report.....75

Heir It Is.....75

Probes/Chapter Eye Openers/ Quizzes & Activities....75

Total.....525

Grades will be figured on the scale of:

A=100-90% B= 89-80% C= 79-70% D= 69-60% F= 59% and below

or

A modified bell-curve will be created for the class. You will get the higher of the bell-curve or percentage grade.

Mini-groups...The class will be divided into mini-groups which will be the constant set of individuals you will work with for class activities and discussions.

Grade book numbers...Each student will be assigned a grade book number to use on all papers that are submitted. This enables for grading papers anonymously, quick distribution and collation of

papers, and some degree of a student's protection from others viewing his/her paper.

Research report

..**Write a 4-6 page paper which relates communication to a specific areas of family communication.** The paper must be based on research and/or field work. A bibliography of the research must be included. Since this is an upper-level course, the quality of the bibliography will be an integral part of the grade, as will the language used, and the quality of the report.

..**Report is due at the start of class on February 26.**

..**Reports are to be stapled with a cover page. The students grade book number and the course number should be on the cover page, along with the topic of the report.**

..**Reports are to be typed, double spaced.**

..**Each student will give a 3 to 5 minute summary of his/her report to the class at the appropriate time during the semester or during the scheduled report time, whichever is appropriate for the topic selected. This presentation will be in formal speech format.**

..**Reports will be kept by the professor, so each student should make a copy for his/her use.**

TOPICS:

1 TOXIC PARENTS (TOXIC PARENTS, SUSAN FORWARD)

2 REFILLING THE NEST SYNDROME--WHEN CHILDREN RETURN TO THEIR PARENT'S HOME BECAUSE OF DIVORCE, GRADUATION FROM COLLEGE, LACK OF FINANCIAL MEANS TO LIVE ON HIS/HER OWN

3 BISEXUAL AND/OR GAY MEN/WOMEN LIVING IN HETEROSEXUAL MARRIAGES

4 FAMILY PATTERNS IN CO-CULTURAL SOCIETIES (BLACK, HISPANIC, ITALIAN, ETC.)

5. INCEST IN THE FAMILY (BETRAYAL OF INNOCENCE, SUSAN FORWARD)

6. WIFE OR HUSBAND BATTERING

7. INFERTILITY--ITS EFFECT ON MARRIAGE

8. CHILD ABUSE--CAUSES, PREVALENCE, TREATMENT PROGRAMS FOR ABUSERS

9. THE SUPER MOM SYNDROME

10. TEEN RUNAWAYS

11. STRESSES OF RETIREMENT ON FAMILY UNITS

12. THE ROLE OF THE BLACK MALE IN THE FAMILY UNIT

13. INTERRACIAL MARRIAGES--PROBLEMS IN FOR ADULTS

14. INTERRACIAL MARRIAGES--PROBLEMS IN FOR CHILDREN

15. INTERRELIGIOUS MARRIAGES--PROBLEMS IN FOR ADULTS

16. INTERRELIGIOUS MARRIAGES--PROBLEMS IN FOR CHILDREN

17. ADOPTION--PROBLEMS FOR THE CHILD

18. GAY/LESBIAN MARRIAGES

19. OLDER MAN-YOUNGER WOMAN MARRIAGES

20. OLDER WOMAN-YOUNGER MAN MARRIAGES

21. EFFECTS ON THE FAMILY OF LIVING WITH AN ALCOHOLIC PARENT

22. BEING A TEENAGE GAY OR LESBIAN--ITS EFFECT ON THE FAMILY

23. HYPERACTIVE CHILDREN--WHAT ARE THEY? WHAT CAUSES IT? THEIR EFFECT ON THE FAMILY

24. PREMARRIAGE CONFERENCES (E.G., THE CATHOLIC AND MORMON

CHURCHES' PROCEDURES)

25. MR. MOM

26. CO-PARENTING--WHAT IT IS AND THE EFFECTS ON THE CHILDREN

27. COURTSHIP "ROLE PLAYING" VERSES MARRIAGE "REALITY"--WHAT A PERSON DOES/DOESN'T LEARN ABOUT A PROSPECTIVE PARTNER FROM THE DATING PROCESS

28. TOUGH LOVE

29. THE EFFECT OF BIRTH ORDER--BEING THE FIRST BORN (GROWING UP FIRST BORN or THE BIRTH ORDER BOOK, KEVIN LEMAN)

30. THE EFFECT OF BIRTH ORDER--THE YOUNGEST CHILD (THE BIRTH ORDER BOOK, KEVIN LEMAN)

31. GROWING UP IN A LARGE FAMILY--POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES

32. PLANNING THE WEDDING--A SOURCE FOR CONFLICT OR TOGETHERNESS?

33. PARENTHOOD AFTER 40.

34. SINGLE-UNMARRIED MOTHERHOOD--PLUSES AND MINUSES.

35. SINGLE-UNMARRIED FATHERHOOD--PLUSES, MINUSES, RESPONSIBILITIES

36. THE EFFECT ON THE CHILD OF THE FIRST NAME SELECTED FOR HIM/HER

37. FAMILIES IN THE URBAN GHETTO

38. THE HOMELESS FAMILY UNIT

39. THE EFFECT OF A WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

40. THE EMPTY NEST SYNDROME

Heir It Is...We each come from a heritage. These family stories are often lost to future generations. You are going to ensure that some aspect of your family remains. You are to prepare a

story, family scrap book, audio or video tape, picture book, family tree, or drawings with documentation that tells about your family. Preferably you should go back as far as you can to create this family history. Be creative in your search for information...interview your oldest living relative, search genealogical records, ask other relatives what they know. The format and length of the presentation is up to you. All materials will be returned.

Chapter Eye Openers...As you read each chapter your are to select the idea presented that you found most interesting. You will often be asked to share these topics with the class. Chapter eye-openers are to be placed at the start of each section of family/chapter probes.

Family /Chapter Probes...The course provides a framework from which you can become a more astute observer of your family and families in general. To heighten your abilities to focus on interactional patterns, each of you during the course, are to systematically investigate your family or a family of your choice. The object of these observations is to identify, describe and analyze: 1) the patterns of the family interaction and communication, 2) the rules that guide these repetitive sequences of behavior, 3) the impact of these patterns on family members, and 4) if, appropriate, strategies that might promote more effective family interaction. These observations will serve as the basis for discussion, allow for a personalization of family and relational system understanding, as well as provide the

answers to the chapter discussions and some of the test questions. Students are to answer the questions posed for each chapter (see attached list).

Select a family unit in which you were or are presently an active participant (your family of origin, a blended family, a couplehood, your extended family).

Chapters are to be read and probe entries completed by the Tuesday of the week listed in the Course Materials section of this syllabus.

Format for probes: clarify the statement or answer the question and give an example or examples. Each entry should be on a separate sheet of paper, in this way you will be able to select the entries you want to hand in. Please indicate your grade book number on each entry along with the question number (1-1, 1-2, 1-3, etc.)

If you feel a question is too personal you may omit answering that question. Place the question number on a sheet and write "personal" on the page. (Please do not abuse this option.)

Each week you will be asked to hand in specific entries. Since students are asked to be open and honest in their answers, an option will be given as to which assignment(s) will be selected for submission. Please carry your journals with you. No previous notice will be given as to the date of the collection of the materials.

MATERIALS TURNED IN WILL BE TREATED AS PRIVILEGED INFORMATION AND WILL BE READ ONLY BY THE INSTRUCTOR ON A

CLIENT-COUNSELOR BASIS. NO EXAMPLES WILL BE USED IN CLASS UNLESS THE STUDENT VOLUNTEERS SUCH INFORMATION.

In evaluating your answers the value or quality of the family will NOT be judged, only the completeness of the answer and the ability to answer the question posed will be taken into consideration. Probes will be graded with a *10* when the quality of the probe is *extremely well developed,* a *7* indicating the probe has *fulfilled the requirements;* or a *5* indicating the materials presented *do not fulfill the minimum requirements* for the assignment.

Students may select either of these methods for instructor comments:

Method A--The instructor will place the appropriate mark on the paper and make no comments other than whether the material fulfills the assignment.

Method B--The instructor will place the appropriate mark on the paper and react to the ideas presented. If this method is selected the student may ask questions in the answers and/or submit any entries that he/she wishes the instructor to react to even though they are not those requested for grading.

If this activity is too traumatic please see the instructor during office hours the first two weeks of the quarter to discuss an alternative assignment.

PROBE QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS

(The page numbers following some of the questions indicates where in the text the material is covered.)

CHAPTER 1

1-1 Eye Opener

1-2 Using the definition and basic premises on page 2-6, classify your family type. Describe why you selected this title.

1-3 If appropriate, use your family to explain the statement, "Ethnicity may affect family life through its traditions, celebrations occupations, values and problem solving."

CHAPTER 2

2-1 Eye Opener

2-2 Use your family to explain, "It is nonproductive to analyze each individual separately because of the integrative nature of the system. Each individual communicates within the context of a system, and each communication act reflects the nature of those relationships. (14)

2-3 Describe the cohesion in your family. Used the terminology in the drawing on page 20 in your answer.

2-4 Describe the adaptability in your family. Use the terminology in the model on page 21 in your answer.

2-5 What are some of your families images? (24)

2-6 What are some of your family's themes? (25)

2-7 What are some of your family's boundaries? (27)

2-8 Describe your family's biosocial issues (29)

CHAPTER 3

3-1 Eye Opener

3-2 Is your family dependent or interdependent? Use an example to illustrate this. (35)

3-3 Describe your family's personal patterns and rules. (37-40)

3-4 Is your family system open or closed? Explain. (42-43)

3-5 Identify and explain one of the following as they relate to your family: psychological subsystem, coalition, family triangle. (44-45)

3-6 Select one of the six concepts concerning a systems perspective from the top of page 47 and, using your family, illustrate the concept.

CHAPTER 4

4-1 Eye Opener

4-2 Using the terms on pages 53-54 used to describe the characteristics of developed relationships, identify some of your family's characteristics. use examples in your answer.

4-3 Describe what you consider to be the most important of your family of origin influences. (55-60)

4-4 a. What are some of your family rules? (60-67)

b. What have been some of the effects of the family rules on your belief system, relationships with others, goals for the future?

4-5 Draw a diagram illustrating your family communication network. Using the book's definition,s identify the type of network it is. (67-71)

CHAPTER 5

5-1 Eye Opener

5-2 What are the types of relational currencies used in your family? (76-78)

5-3 (a) Do you have difficulty in self-disclosing? (b) Is there something in your family background which has influenced your disclosure patterns? (c) What have been the consequences of your ability or lack of ability to self-disclose? (88-89)

5-4 What in your biosocial beliefs affects your attitudes about sex and lovemaking? (96-102)

5-6 (a) What are you attitudes regarding intimacy? (b) If you fear intimacy use the Feldman list on 102 to explain your answer OR (b) If you are a high risker in intimacy explain what in your family history laid the foundations for your attitudes.

CHAPTER 6

6-1 Eye Opener

6-2 Is your family position-oriented, person-oriented, or a combination? Explain and illustrate with specific examples. (109)

6-3 Using Table 6-1: (a) if you come from a traditional family (both mother and father present) did your male or female parent each perform a majority of the sex roles indicated? (b) If you did not come from a traditional family, think of a friend or relative who came from such a background and indicate whether her/his parents performed the described roles.

6-4 Describe the kinship maintenance in your family. (120)

6-5 Who in your family provides: (a) kinship maintenance, (b)

management of daily needs, (c) basic resources?

6-6 Using Table 6-2 use your parents or some other married couple you know: Which couple type are they? What is your evidence for this conclusion?

6-7 (a) Using Table 6-3 (131) typify your family, (b) explain how you reached your conclusion, (c) what effect has this family type had on you?

CHAPTER 7

7-1 Eye Opener

7-2 Using your family, explain the statement, "Power is the ability of one or more family members to prevail in a family setting of conflicting ends so that goals are achieved. To understand power, one must identify the pattern of verbal and nonverbal interaction the family goes through to accomplish a goal." (134)

7-3 Using the explanation of power outcomes (140-142) explain your family's power outcomes.

7-4 What type of power pattern best describes your family? Explain your answer and indicate this pattern's effect on you. (143-145)

7-5 What are the power interactions and alliances in your family? (147)

7-6 Select one of the sample power strategies (149) and indicate how it is used in your family.

7-7 Name an incident in your life that illustrates when gentle power or control power was used by a family member. (151)

CHAPTER 8

8-1 Eye Opener

8-2 Describe your family's typical decision making process. (155-157)

8-3 Using Figure 7-1 (156) briefly list and explain how each of these are used in your family's decision making.

8-4 Which of the types of decision making on pages 157-158 are most typical of your family's decision making process? Explain your answer and give an example(s).

8-5 Identify and describe your family's style of governance. (159-162)

8-6 What is the role of gender influences on your family's decision making? Explain your answer and give an example(s).

CHAPTER 9

9-1 Eye Opener

9-2 Describe one of your family's (a) realistic conflicts, (b) nonrealistic conflicts. (175)

9-3 Select one person in your family. Using Figure 9-1 and the description on 176-177, identify and explain that person's conflict style. (You may use yourself.)

9-4 Using the Stages of Conflictual Process (Figure 9-2) and the explanation on 177-180, trace a real and typical personal conflict in your family.

9-5 Define the following and give an example as they apply to your family: (a) costs, (b) rewards, (c) reciprocity. (186)

9-6 Based on the type of family your are (your answer to 6-7),

does your family follow the conflict pattern described on page 188? Explain.

9-7 Select one of the covert or overt destructive communication strategies (190-194) that has been used by you with your family. Identify the strategy and explain what happened.

9-8 Give a specific instance when your family used each of the four constructive conflict strategies described on pages 196-199.

CHAPTER 10

10-1 Eye Opener

10-2 Identify a marker event which created stress in your family. (201)

10-3 Are there any vertical stressors in your family? What are they and how did/do they affect you? (203)

10-4 How easy or difficulty is it or has it been for you and your family as you experience orientation or autonomy as it is or has lead to interdependence and attachment? (207)

10-5 What brought your parents together (or) what brought you and your spouse together (or) what brought another couple who is a family together? Was the "theory of complimentary needs" put into effect? (208-211)

10-6 If you have, or if you were to have children, what parts of your background do you wish to pass on to them? (214)

10-7 Explain your parent's reaction and/or your personal feelings about your sex and birth order. Are comments made about your being the youngest, oldest, etc.? What "crosses have you had

to bear" if any, for your birth order placement? (217)

10-8 Very briefly describe your adolescence and your family's reaction to it. (219-222)

10-9 What was your launching like? (222-224)

CHAPTER 11

11-1 Eye Opener

11-2 Describe a stress situation your family experienced by applying the Double ABCX Model on page 234.

11-3 How does your family handle the process of death? (You might want to examine the anticipation of death, the funeral process and/or the grieving process.) 237-250)

11-4 (OPTIONAL)--Design your own funeral (all of it--announcement, the type of burial/cremation/donation, ceremony OR any part of it).

11-5 (OPTIONAL)--If you are a child of a divorced family. Write a letter to one or both your parents telling them what they did right or wrong and the results.

CHAPTER 12

12-1 Eye Opener

12-2 If you have experience (been part of or been an active observer), of a single-parent, step family, physical custody, reconstituted system, co-parenting, or homosexual-parenting family/home, describe your reactions to the system. If you have not been, describe your reactions to any of those family types that you have read about, observed, or seen on TV or in a movie.

12-3 (a) Do you feel that couplehood should be legalized? (b) Do you think individuals involved in couplehood should be allowed to adopt children? What or why not?

12-4 What do you consider to the advantages and/or disadvantages of cohabitation? (268-270)

CHAPTER 13

13-1 Eye Opener

13-2 Answer questions 1-6 on pages 274-275.

13-3 Describe your family's space patterns. What are the rules? Use the list on 276-278 as a guide for your answer.

13-4 Explain your need for privacy and how it was/wasn't accommodated in your family. (277-278)

13-5 Describe time use by you and your family...both clocking and synchronizing behaviors. (278-280)

13-6 Describe the communication of your home by examining the exterior arrangement, house placement, neighborhood, interior arrangement. (281-288) Did the setting or the arrangement have any effects on you?

CHAPTER 14

14-1 Eye Opener

14-2 Using the continuum range on page 294, mark your family's communication. Explain your answer.

14-3 Using Henry's findings, describe and evaluate your family's communication system. (295)

14-4 How can/could your family's communication been improved?

14-5 Do you believe that outside help can or should be used by

family's in order to work toward alternation or enhancement of their communication?